

**Opening Remarks of U.S. Representative Judy Biggert (R-IL-13<sup>th</sup>)**  
**Chairman, Science Subcommittee on Energy**  
***The Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle Act of 2006 (Discussion Draft)***  
***Committee on Science***  
***Wednesday, May 17, 2006***

Good morning. I want to welcome everyone to this Energy Subcommittee hearing on the many potential contributions that plug-in hybrid electric vehicles could make to our energy security.

Last year, if somebody had asked me if I had any plans to chair a hearing on plug-in hybrids in 2006, my response would have been: what's a plug-in hybrid? Yet here we are today, examining a discussion draft of legislation that will be introduced by a senior member of this committee, Congressman Lamar Smith, to promote the development and use of plug-in hybrids. I want to thank Mr. Smith for introducing me to the plug-in hybrid.

What's so special about a plug-in hybrid? In a nutshell, average Americans, who drive their cars or trucks between 25 and 30 miles in a day, could complete their commute and run some errands without burning a drop of gasoline. That's good for energy security, not to mention the pocketbook.

Furthermore, the technology to make this happen is an improvement upon existing technology in the market today. Unlike hydrogen fuel cells – which are still very much in the research and development stage and by some estimates still 20 years from reaching the market – conventional or traditional hybrids can be found in dealership lots across the country and are growing in popularity. With research, I hope this transition from conventional hybrids to plug-in hybrids can proceed quickly.

And there is nothing like a \$3 gallon of gasoline to get us thinking about new and creative ways to diversify the fuel supply and use anything besides gasoline to power our vehicles. As I have said many times before, I do not believe that there is a single solution to our energy problems. Plug-in hybrids would allow us to power our cars with clean energy, including from renewable sources such as solar and wind. They also can be fueled by other clean and abundant sources like nuclear and even coal – preferably from power plants employing advanced clean coal technologies that I hope will soon be the norm.

The fact of the matter is that all Americans, including those in my suburban Chicago district, want to hop into their cars and go. Very few care what makes their car go. They simply want it to be inexpensive and easy to get. Again, the consumer is pointing us in the right direction. We should be working towards cars that can run on whatever energy source is available at the lowest cost: be it electricity, gasoline, biofuel, or some combination of these.

That brings me to my final point on the potential benefits of the plug-in hybrid – they do not require a whole new “refueling” infrastructure. To think that you could pull into your garage at the end of the day and “fill ‘er up” just by plugging your car into a regular, 110-volt socket in the garage is very appealing. Imagine the convenience of recharging your car just as you recharge your cell phone, blackberry, or laptop every evening – by simply plugging it in. The next morning, unplug it and you are ready to go.

That’s not to say there aren’t challenges to realizing the potential benefits of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. Our purpose here today is to identify the most significant obstacles facing the widespread commercial availability of these vehicles. Are there technical or cost-competitiveness issues with important components, such as batteries or power electronics? Do consumer preferences or auto industry inertia present high hurdles? Our witnesses today can help us understand what additional steps the federal government can take to address these barriers and accelerate the development and deployment of plug-in hybrids.

But before we get to our witnesses, I would like to yield the remainder of my time to my colleague from Texas, Mr. Smith.

#### **MR. SMITH (TX) REMARKS**

Thank you, Mr. Smith, for your comments and for the leadership you have taken on this issue. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide input on your draft legislation, and I will certainly do whatever I can to move it expeditiously toward enactment.

Before I recognize the ranking member, Mr. Honda, for his opening statement, I just want to make a quick announcement and recognize a couple of folks from CalCars who have a special treat for us this morning. At the conclusion of our hearing, we have an opportunity to see two plug-in hybrids by CalCars at noon at the corner of New Jersey Avenue and C Street Southeast, courtesy of Representatives Jack Kingston and Elliot Engel. Begging everyone’s apology, this really is a technology “right around the corner,” so I hope everyone here will join us.

Mr. Honda?